



The OVR Review

"To assist Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve suitable employment and independence"

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Article submitted by Dave Matheis

Consumer Spotlight

David Schlacter



David Schlacter

Late last May, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation conducted its fifth annual Summer Assistive Technology Workshop in collaboration with the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky and Kentucky AgrAbility. The workshops, which were held once again at Cardinal Hill Hospital in Lexington, consisted of three former consumers of the agency describing their experiences with assistive technology and how it assisted them in obtaining employment. One of these individuals was David Schlacter. He expressed profound gratitude to the agency in the course of his 30-minute talk. He described how his partnership with Carol Weber, OVR Rehabilitation Engineer and his counselor, Shawne Kinsman, enabled him to continue his teaching career.

David has worked in the education field for 32 years, mostly as a principal in South Carolina. He returned to the classroom six years ago at St. Catherine's Parochial School in Northern Kentucky. Muscular neuropathy, however, was beginning to affect his ability to teach, making writing and typing very difficult. Shawne referred him to Carol and her creativity combined with David's determination and willingness to experiment produced impressive results. As he put it during his presentation in May: 'Carol came to school, listened to my concerns and came up with so many wonderful solutions that it had my head spinning. All I wanted was some help with some voice activated software and she came up with so many other solutions that have made my life just so much better.'

The voice activation software was indeed provided, eliminating the need for David to type, and an adjustable desk served as an accommodation for his lanky frame (he is six foot, eight inches tall). As David described it, 'she allowed me to pick the one I thought would work best for me, which was very empowering.' The main innovation in his case, however, was the SMART®™ Board. David was having great trouble writing on the chalkboard, severely limiting his ability to teach his fifth-grade class. The board, six feet in length, features a touch-sensitive screen with many



David Schlacter stands beside his first modified desk.

functions and Internet connectivity. It was an immediate hit in the classroom, both with the teacher and the students. 'Our SMART® board is used probably ninety percent of the day. It has revolutionized how I teach. Now I can create documents and save them to be used over and over again. No more breathing chalk dust! Much less fatigue!' The board was such a hit in the classroom, in fact, that the school has obtained four more SMART® boards in the past year for other classrooms.

David's assistive technology has made him 'much more efficient and much more creative with less effort involved.' David concluded his presentation by saying: 'I want to send my heartfelt thanks to all who work for vocational rehabilitation. The work you do helps people like me to be able to do the work we love not only longer, but better.'

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Message from Executive Director, Beth Smith

Agency in the Midst of Change



Change is sometimes difficult, but it is inevitable. I can't help but think about all the changes that have taken place over the last few months. With the closeout of FY 2008, it strikes me that it is the beginning of a new era at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. A budget crunch, the retirement of Sherri Greer and a Central Office relocation top the list of the things that have or will significantly change the atmosphere in Frankfort and statewide for VR. First of all, the budget has been the priority for not only me, but also for every staff member. We are all looking at ways to maximize our ability to serve our consumers within the budget constraints in which we currently find ourselves. A tough economy and a lack of adequate revenue have made both state and federal governments tighten their belts. I have to commend all of you who have contributed with ideas on the best way for budget issues to have a minimum impact on people with disabilities who want to find employment. For now our consumers have the resources available to get the services they need.

The second item is the retirement of long-time Frankfort staple Sherri Greer. Sherri was an asset to this agency that can not soon be replaced. She did her job with poise and grace, while always considering her staff and consumers over herself. Everyone in VR will miss her leadership and experience. I would like to personally wish her the best of luck in her retirement. Although Sherri will be sorely missed, we have begun the process of locating an individual to head up Program Services.

Finally, we are just a few months away from relocating Central Office to the CHR Building here in Frankfort. Since this is a state-owned building, we will now be putting money directly into the state coffers instead of a private company. I realize this presents a new set of challenges. However, I expect our staff as always to rise to the occasion.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for the extra hard work you all put in during the closeout period. I assure you that it does not go unnoticed in Frankfort. We truly appreciate what you do and let's continue to serve our consumers to the best of our abilities.

CDPVTC Update

New CDPVTC Academic Program a Resounding Success

Article submitted by Evelyn DeBoard

In August 2007, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center opened a new academic program to assist students to prepare for training programs at the Center, other vocational schools or colleges and to offer further assistance and support while attending classes off-campus.

This program was developed to assist students in making the difficult transition to secondary education. Historically, the Center has found great success in preparing students to enter training areas or other vocational schools or colleges, but still many have experienced a lack of success and a low completion rate for off-campus classes as well.

Entering the world of vocational school or college campus life can be overwhelming and that is where the Academic and Lifeskills Program of Higher Achievement, (ALPHA) can benefit Vocational Rehabilitation consumers. The Center offers classes

in reading, math, language, writing, ACT preparation, COMPASS preparation, computer skills, college life social skills, research and study skills and more. Assistance is available to help students complete the financial aid application process, center staff provides tours of local college and vocational school campuses, a computer lab is available for on-line classes and the ALPHA instructor acts as an academic liaison.

ALPHA has been a success. Enrollment in this program has doubled for the Fall 2008 semester. The program has increased student retention and reduced the need for students to attend developmental classes.

For more information on this and other programs available at CDPVTC, please contact Evelyn DeBoard, Director of Vocational Services, at 606-788-7080, Ext. 156 or 1-800-443-2187.

Employee Spotlight Presents Rebecca Mathis

Louisville Area Welcomes Mississippi Transplant



A recent transplant from Mississippi has proven to be a great asset in the Louisville, Middletown and Elizabethtown districts in a short amount of time. Rebecca Mathis started providing rehabilitation engineering services to those districts in May of 2007 and has managed to work herself into a bulging caseload of

consumers. Staff and consumers alike have been very pleased with the impact Rebecca has had in the area. As Pam Jarboe, manager of the Middletown district, recently put it: 'Rebecca is like a breath of fresh air, she is eager to serve the public and does so with ease and creativity. She will go anywhere, from a farm to an attorney's office.' According to Louisville counselor Vicki Lang, 'My young consumers respond very well to Rebecca. I had a mother tell me that Rebecca was the only person that convinced her daughter to seek accommodations when she went off to college.'

Rebecca moved to Kentucky from Laurel, Mississippi where she grew up. She was actually born in Louisville while her father was a student at the Southern Baptist Seminary, but her family moved back to Mississippi when she was a small child. She returned to Louisville when her husband, Wade, entered the seminary's graduate program. In more than one sense, it appears, her life has come full circle.

Rebecca received both her bachelor's and master's degree from Mississippi State University, completing her education in 2006. Her undergraduate degree is in Biological Engineering and her graduate degree is in Biomedical Engineering with an emphasis on Ergonomics and the Human Factor. She took her first rehabilitation engineering class as a junior and loved it. She selected her profession because it combined a love of mathematics and science with her desire to interact with and assist.

Rebecca went to college initially on a trial basis, not knowing if her disability would allow her to physically handle a full college schedule. Rebecca has Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare genetic disease characterized by extremely fragile skin that blisters easily from friction, heat or trauma. An estimated one out of every 50,000 births is affected with some type of EB. In Rebecca's case, the blisters resemble chronic

second degree burns. She has to closely monitor her physical activity and, in fact, used a wheelchair throughout high school. During her first semester in college, three of her five courses were correspondence classes, but she soon found she was able to adapt to the demands of school. After graduation, she worked at the T. K. Martin Comprehensive Assistive Technology Center on campus where she dealt with referrals from the Mississippi state vocational rehabilitation agency. This experience, combined with the fact that she had been a consumer of services, meant she came to Kentucky with an intimate knowledge of disability and vocational rehabilitation services.

It is obvious that Rebecca loves her work. She says she is rewarded when 'technology makes a difference for a person and I know we have helped someone to be successful.' She points to a couple of specific cases she has worked on since she started her job. One involved providing full access for a medical student in a wheelchair to partake in his classes, including enabling him to fully participate at the cadaver table. Another case involved converting the cell phone of an individual who has no speech but loves texting into a fully functioning augmentative communication device. This meant shipping the telephone to Spain for conversions in the phone's software at no cost, beyond shipping, to the agency.

Her job also comes with frustrations. Her ever increasing number of referrals makes it difficult to give each case the time it needs. She also finds it frustrating when 'people have unreasonable expectations that technology is going to be a cure all when it is not.'

In a short amount of time, Rebecca has managed to fit in nicely in the Louisville and Elizabethtown areas. As Louisville counselor Linda Irvin puts it, 'Rebecca is one of the most accommodating people I have worked with. Nothing is ever too much trouble for her. She thinks out of the box and is extremely patient in explaining how to use new technology to my consumers.'

One thing Rebecca appreciates about her new Kentucky home is the fact it has four actual seasons. Mississippi, it seems, is either 'hot and muggy' or 'hot and rainy.'

For more information about Epidermolysis Bullosa, visit www.debra.org.

Program Services Report

Agency Introduces New Case Management System on October 8

On October 8, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will implement a new Case Management System (CMS) software in all of its offices. This marks the first major overhaul in the agency's case management software since 1998. This new system is completely web-based and 508 compliant. The enhanced accessibility of a web-based environment, in fact, was a major impetus behind the move. As an agency that advocates and assists persons with disabilities, it is imperative that OVR have a case management system that is accessible to all staff.

The new CMS has several advantages over the system it is replacing that should increase the efficiency of the staff and improve services to consumers. For one, because it is web-based, it will not add any software to individual desktop computers, resulting in faster operation. Because the new system has more flexibility, many corrections and changes to data that are currently being done by the programmers can now be made by agency staff. In this new system, only information that is pertinent to the current status of a case is required, simplifying data entry. In addition, staff will now have the ability to make basic changes to the case file that previously required involvement from Central Office.

Users will be validated based on their network logon, eliminating the need for an additional logon procedure. The system will notify users automatically when anomalies in data have been entered, such as a date of birth making a consumer over 75 years of age, an individual working less than 2 hours and more than 60 hours per week, or wages greater than \$45.00 per hour or less than minimum wage, reducing the need to make changes later. The new system allows budget units to be tied directly to districts, reducing the possibility of errors.

The new system will increase the options for searches of the data base. Check payment data will now be entered, including check number and check, eliminating the need to contact central office for the information. All correspondence related to a case will be maintained on the system and will always be readily available, even after case closure. The new CMS will be based on workflow, allowing the user to move a case to the next step only when the previous step is complete.

Staff providing non purchased services, such as job placement specialists, rehabilitation technologists and staff at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center, will now have the ability to record their services directly



All agency staff was trained in the new CMS software before October 1. The Lexington District is pictured.

into the CMS, eliminating the need to maintain separate databases. This takes the responsibility of entering and correctly reporting services provided by staff off of the counselor and assistant, further simplifying their jobs. It also gives staff the ability to communicate within the case file any information concerning the consumer.

This system will create many opportunities for enhancement and streamlining. The long term vision includes allowing staff to access the system remotely outside their offices and, eventually, for the agency to become paperless. There are many security issues that need to be worked out before this can happen, but to move toward those goals, the system must be web-based.

The look and feel of this system is vastly different from the previous incarnation of the CMS and it will take some time for staff to adjust. But any users of the agency's first automated system, introduced in 1988, will appreciate the vast progress that has been made over the years.



Judy Caudill and Margaret Agee from the Lexington District attend the CMS Training.

HRD Update

KRA Holds Annual Conference

Over 200 individuals attended the annual Kentucky Rehabilitation Association (KRA) conference held on August 27 – 29 at the Marriott in downtown Louisville. Many of the attendees were employees of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. A Job Placement Division pre-conference breakfast was held on Wednesday followed by a conference-opening business meeting and keynote speaker. Thursday featured concurrent sessions with topics that included substance abuse issues, autism, suicide prevention and a youth advisory panel from the Commission for Children with Special Healthcare Needs. The conference was a great success.



Several attendees register for the conference



Jane Smith, OVR Counselor and Sue Weese, OVR retired



Kenetta Potter, OFB Counselor and Mary Beth Schoen, OVR Counselor



Jennifer Morse passing gavel to new KRA president, Jonathan White

KRA

HRD Update

KRA Announces Award Winners

Professional Achievement

Missy Wheeler

Ben F. Coffman

Sherri Greer

Wendell Taylor

OVR Interpreters

Charles McDowell

Vicki Lang

KRA Staff Award

Kathy Taulbee

Janet B. Gold Job Placement Award

Suzanne Isaacs

KARSS- Margaret T. Wilson

Mary Beth Schoen

KARSS-Special Recognition

Rita Vest

KARL Leadership Award

Don Hiatt

KRCEA Counselor of the Year

Keith Banks



KRA interpreters (Wendell Taylor Memorial award)



Don Hiatt (KARL Leadership Award)

Personnel Changes

Information submitted by Carmen Freeman

New Employees

Charlinda Brashear	July 1
Janice Williams-Sisson	July 1
Penny Collings	July 16
Lisa Cannon	August 1
Melissa Miller	August 16
Teresa Adkins	September 1
Jeffrey Fischer	September 1

Promotions

Jonathan White	September 1
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Retirements/Resignations

Kristen Smythe-Mansfield	July 15
Melissa Lynn Moore	July 29
Kathy Arnold	July 31
Vicki Blackburn	July 31
Jerry Howard	August 6
Amy Carver	August 15
Sandra Killion	August 31
Sherri Greer	August 31
Rhonda Wedding	August 31
Fredrick H. Rutledge	August 31
Joyce Graham	September 30
Pat Agee	September 30

HRD Update

Kentucky APSE Hosts National Conference

Kentucky recently played host to the national conference of the Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE). The conference, entitled 'APSE: The Network on Employment,' was held in Louisville, July 9-11. There were over 500 professionals, advocates, family members and consumers who attended the event. The conference featured Dale DiLeo, author of Raymond's Room; Dr. Shirley Davis, Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM); Joe Marrone, Institute for Community Inclusion/UMASS Boston; and Patrick Henry Hughes, a University of Louisville student who has been featured on Extreme Makeover Home Edition and many other media outlets; plus over 100 breakout sessions. Both national and Kentucky APSE awards were presented at the banquet. Special congratulations to OVR's Linda Irvin who received the Nancy Hall Supported Employment Advocacy Award from Kentucky APSE. APSE is a strong advocate, both statewide and nationally, for the employment of people with significant disabilities and Kentucky was thrilled to host this incredible organization.



Linda Irvin receives her award at National APSE

Sherri Greer Retires



Sherri Greer, longtime Director of Program Services, retired on August 31 after 27 years of state service, including 25 with the agency. A retirement reception was held for her on August 22. Speakers at the reception included Jack Cline, administrator in Eastern Kentucky, Don Hiatt, district manager from Florence, Barry Newill, director of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center, Lee Gordon, chairperson of the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation and Cora McNabb from the Office for the Blind. The Master of Ceremonies was Wade Bailey who retired last year. Throughout her service to the agency, Sherri was deeply committed to her 'family' of vocational rehabilitation staff and consumers. At the time of her retirement, she was the Deputy Executive Director of the agency.

Fond Farewell for Dr. Wayne Mulkey

Dr. Wayne Mulkey has been involved in the field of rehabilitation for 42 years. Among his many accomplishments during his 27 years of employment with the University of Tennessee Regional Continuing Education Program (RCEP), Dr. Mulkey assisted with the development of the Kentucky Professional Rehabilitation Assistants (PRA) program for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office for the Blind. Dr. Mulkey has been professionally and personally committed to the program since its inception and we have come to think of him not only as a colleague, but a friend as well. The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Office for the Blind honored Dr. Mulkey on September 4th. He was presented with cards, letters, poems and books from PRA members along with several special gifts that represent our state. Dr. Mulkey will be missed and we wish him the best in his upcoming retirement. The Rehabilitation Services Administration is changing from the current RCEP programs to Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Centers (TACE) that will involve a slightly different role and result in the closing of the University of Tennessee RCEP.



Veeta Bain, Dr. Wayne Mulkey, Marcia Egbert, Vicki Yeary, Cora McNabb, and Susie Edwards

NEWS BITS

OVR Conducting Comprehensive Needs Assessment

In July, OVR began a year long process of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities. Such an assessment is required every three years as part of the state plan the agency and the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR). The assessment must be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Throughout August and September, individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers, advocates, OVR staff and the general public have been surveyed about their perceptions of the needs of Kentuckians with disabilities, particularly in terms of employment. As of this writing, 600 people have taken the survey, mostly on-line. Staff will also be collecting data from a variety of secondary sources over the next several months. Working with a number of stakeholders, including the SCVR, the agency will formulate goals and objectives for the next three years based on the needs assessment.

Interested individuals can still complete the needs assessment survey on-line through October 15 by visiting the OVR website at <http://ovr.gov/index.htm>.

Michelle P. Waiver Rolls Out

In 2002, four individuals with developmental disabilities sued the Commonwealth of Kentucky because the state did not provide enough help for them to live in the community instead of an institution. The suit was recently settled with the state agreeing to provide extra services. The resulting new Medicaid program is called the Michelle P. Waiver. It provides a variety of services designed to enable individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities to live in their communities. Among these services are attendant care, minor home adaptations, behavioral support and supported employment, to name a few. There is a limit of a total of forty hours per week for most services. Individuals can apply through their local Community Mental Health Center. The centers can be found at <http://mhmr.ky.gov/cmhac> or by calling (502) 564-4527.

Social Security Administration Issues New Ticket-to-Work Regulations

In July, the Social Security Administration (SSA) issued new regulations designed to significantly improve its Ticket to Work Program. The new regulations expand the program to all adult beneficiaries between the ages of 18 and 64, make milestone payments possible for work that is initially part-time and further encourage the use of SSA work incentives. The new regulations also open the door for greater cooperation and partnership between state vocational rehabilitation agencies and Employment Networks (EN). The state agencies and the Employment Networks can now provide 'sequential' services. The state agencies can serve beneficiaries under the traditional Cost Reimbursement arrangement with SSA to start an individual in employment. The beneficiary can subsequently assign his or her Ticket to an Employment Network to provide job retention and ongoing support services.

OVR's District Social Security specialists received training on the new regulations in July. For more information on the new regulations, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/work/newregs.html> on the Web.



Training on the Ticket To Work regulation changes for OVR District Social Security Specialists

Employer Spotlight

Fed Ex Ground One of Five Employers Recognized by Council



Lee Gordon, Beth Smith and Michelle Cobb present the award to Adrienne Woodward, Janet Stemple and Shannon Keller of Fed Ex Ground.

On September 8th, the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation presented its annual Employer Recognition Awards at the Marriott Griffin Gate in Lexington. The following story came from one of the winning nominations. See page 10 for a list of the five employers recognized.

The Florence District has had a very productive year working with Fed Ex Ground in Independence. Fed Ex Ground is a division of Fed Ex, a global leader in the transportation industry. Recent successes in placing individuals with disabilities at the Independence location definitely reflect the company's commitment to "meeting the needs of our customers by reflecting their diversity within our own organization". Fed Ex Ground recently hired four deaf individuals, as well as a person who is hard of hearing and individuals with other disabilities.

Kentucky OVR's relationship with Fed Ex Ground this past year began when employment specialist Michelle Cobb, who coordinates a specialized job search lab for deaf and hard of hearing consumers in the Florence OVR office, came across a job posting from Fed Ex Ground. She assisted several candidates with contacting Fed Ex Ground by telephone. The company was very receptive and encouraged the applicants to come in to complete applications and take a company tour. A team consisting of Carol Leonhart, OVR counselor; Sandra Thompson, interpreter and Judy Swim, supported employment counselor with BAWAC, worked with Fed Ex and the result was successful employment for several individuals.

Fed Ex Ground's application, interviewing, hiring and on board processes were welcoming to the candidates. The company's human resources recruitment team is led by Adrienne Woodard. Nikki Roush, Stacey Pierce and Megan Stone were also involved in the hiring process. Chris Fryia and Jason Rawe are shift supervisors. The company provided the necessary supportive work environment for interpreters from OVR, and, when needed, the Northern Kentucky Services for the Deaf. The company also supported Chris Fryia in taking sign language classes to facilitate communication with the deaf employees. Other accommodations included providing a hand held communication device for a hard of hearing employee as well as providing additional written communication. Fed Ex Ground has also encouraged job coaching where needed and allowed extended time to some associates to learn their jobs.

Fed Ex Ground has exuded a "can-do" attitude which has created an environment for employees with disabilities to be successfully employed. Our experience in the Florence District with the company is indeed reflective of Fed Ex being recognized as one of the top 100 companies by Fortune 500 magazine as a "Best Place to Work". We are glad this "Best Place to Work" includes employees with disabilities!



Mike Sanders, Lee Gordon, Debbie Chandler and Beth Smith present the award to Carla Burns of the US Census Bureau, another employer recognized by the Council.

Know Your Council Members

Matt Davis



Matt Davis

A resident of Bowling Green, Matt Davis is 41 years old and was born with Spina Bifida. He has been the Coordinator of Student Disability Services at Western Kentucky University for over 7 years. He graduated in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in Social Work and obtained a Master's Degree in Social Work in May 2007, both from WKU. Matt serves on the Board of Directors for the BEST, Center for Independent Living, Inc. and on the Kentucky Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Council. An avid sportsman, he enjoys wheelchair racing, tennis, basketball, sled hockey, softball and swimming for cross training. A wheelchair racer since 1997, Matt has participated in over 100 races including 16 marathons. He has been in the Oita International Wheelchair Marathon in Oita, Japan for the past seven years and was in the Seoul Wheelchair Marathon in Seoul, Korea in 2006. He participated in his first Boston Marathon in 2005. He competes in other major competitions both regionally and across the United States.

Save the Date

Upcoming Council and Committee Meetings

Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR) Meeting

Monday, December 8, 2008

9:00-3:30

Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa

1800 Newtown Pike

Lexington, KY 40511

Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC)

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

10:00-12:00

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

209 St. Clair Street

Frankfort, KY 40601

Training Room C, 1st Floor

Employer Recognition Awards

Presented at September Meeting

The 2008 SCVR Employer Recognition Awards were presented on September 8, 2008, at the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa in Lexington, KY. Five employers received awards as selected by the Executive Committee of the Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. Those winners were: Propulsys (Hopkinsville), Amazon and Integrity Staffing (Lexington), Fed Ex Ground (Independence), U.S. Census Bureau (Jeffersonville, Indiana) and Ulrich Medical Concepts (Paducah). Congratulations to all!



Lee Gordon and Beth Smith present the award to Cambria Kelly and Lynn Roy of Amazon and Integrity Staffing.



Lee Gordon, Jan Offutt, Tony Simning, and Beth Smith present the award to Larry Dean of Propulsys.

The OVR Review is a publication of the Kentucky Office for Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or marital status in employment, or provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all program activities.

(Dave Matheis and Nanci Shelden, editors)